

SAVAGE RIVER STATE FOREST

ANNUAL WORK PLAN



FISCAL YEAR 2014

Prepared:

Wade R. Dorsey
(Forest Manager)

4/22/13

Date

Reviewed:

Robert D. DeBorja
(Regional Manager)

4-25-13

Date

Reviewed:

John F. Uhl
(Land Acquisition & Planning)

5/6/13

Date

Approved:

John J. Rend
(Environmental Specialist)

4.25.13

Date

Savage River State Forest Annual Work-plan for FY 2014

A. Forest Overview

Savage River State Forest is approximately 54,594 acres in size and is situated in the northeastern quadrant of Garrett County in Western Maryland. It is a second growth mixed hardwood forest dominated by oak species, sugar and red maple, black cherry, hickory and ash. Owing to high rainfall and certain topographic features, Savage River State Forest contains many excellent quality growing sites stocked with superior quality trees. The forest contains approximately 4000 acres of conifer plantations, established in the 1940's following state acquisition. Red pine is the dominant tree species within these plantations but other conifers include white pine, Norway spruce, larch, and Scotch pine. These plantations were established as nurse crops to rehabilitate abandoned and depleted farm fields, with the long-term goal of conversion back to native hardwoods as appropriate.

Savage River State Forest has been intensively managed for over 60 years. Forest harvest and grooming operations are undertaken to thin overstocked stands, to effectively deal with public safety concerns, to harvest mature or diseased/dying trees, to improve habitat for certain wildlife species, to assist and provide for certain research needs, to address aesthetic concerns, and to increase the proportion of age/height diversity of forested stands.

B. Annual Work Plan Summary

The FY-2014 Annual Work Plan for Savage River State Forest was formulated during 2012. It contains projects to be undertaken in the areas of Silviculture, Maintenance, Special Projects, and Recreation.

Savage River will harvest approximately 1.02 million board feet of sawtimber through implementation of the FY-14 Annual Work Plan. The plan involves ten proposed silvicultural projects within the forest. The three regeneration harvest areas range 10 to 23 acres. Of the seven thinning operations one is a conifer thinning and the remainder are hardwood thinnings.

Silvicultural treatment	Acres	Sawtimber Volume (Bd. Ft.)	Pulpwood Volume (cords)
Pre-commercial Thinning	37		
Commercial Thinning	212	371,604	2,654
Regeneration	53	544,926	872
Spruce Thinning	46	103,300	493

Most of the maintenance projects are of a routine nature. Again most of recreation work is of a routine nature; however we will have a new recreation plan for the

forest to implement which includes starting the Fairview wildlife management area.. A special effort that began in FY 11 and will be ongoing for the next 3 years is stand level data collection as part of our certification and management efforts. Further we will be monitoring all of our silvicultural activities five and 10 years post treatment.

C. Maintenance Projects

Routine maintenance projects include: Building repair and maintenance, mowing at the campus, snow removal, repair and replacement of fire rings and tables at the camp sites, brush hogging trails, and repair of road surfaces.

There are 70 plus primitive camp sites that we maintain. Maintenance and upkeep is on-going with major camp site maintenance focused at the end of the winter, prior to major holidays (such as Memorial Day, 4th of July, and Labor Day) and at the end of the camping season.

There are about 101 miles of trail and hardened road surface on the forest and we are maintaining 1/3 of these each year. This maintenance includes brush hogging and repair of road surfaces. We are also using herbicide in areas where it is too steep or narrow to brush hog. In FY 2014 we anticipate beginning a major effort at restoration and improvement of our trails and road system. We expect to have 37 miles of trails/roads upgraded to our sustainable standards.

There is a public shooting range on the forest that we keep open year round. Maintenance is on-going which includes replacing backboards and general clean-up on a weekly basis. Major efforts are done prior to the holiday seasons and prior to the beginning of the various hunting seasons.

Eighty miles of boundary will be repainted and 5 miles of "lost" boundary will be recovered.

D. Recreation Projects

We will begin implementing the expanded recreation plan that was created in FY 2013.

The portion of the Continental Divide Loop bike trail that goes through the forest will likely be finished in FY 2013, but if not it will be finished in FY 2014. Another portion of this effort is part of our restoration/ improvement effort mentioned in the maintenance project section.

The Wildlife and Heritage Service will be working on 2 acres of herbaceous openings, maintaining 25 bluebird boxes, and pruning some 75 fruit trees. They will also be controlling woody vegetation by mowing and prescribed burning on 40 acres of wildlife openings. The Margroff wildlife habitat unit will have another a soft edge created along one of the gas well areas. The Margroff wildlife habitat unit operating plan

will be completed during this fiscal year. The Fairview wildlife habitat unit plan is complete and included in the Special Projects section.

A new ORV trail is currently in the review process, if approved, it will be installed in fiscal year 14. The use of this new trail along with East Shale Road ORV trail will be regulated with the Compass system, a web-based permitting system. Both trails will be designed to be sustainable and, as part of that, their use will be limited to ensure the stability of the surface and surrounding natural resources. They will also be closed to ORV use to accommodate the hunting public who has used these trails previously

E. Special Projects

There are two special projects for this fiscal year. The first is stream bank stabilization along Big Run Road, and the second is the Fairview wildlife habitat unit operating plan.

Big Run is cutting into the bank and threatening Big Run Road in three places. We are working with Watershed Services, Freshwater Fisheries, Wildlife and Heritage Service and a private engineering firm to design and implement appropriate measures to reduce the erosion of the bank without causing problems down stream.

The Fairview Wildlife Habitat Unit operating plan is described below with particular sections identified with management recommendations and a map covering the area is also included.

The Fairview Wildlife Habitat Unit is an irregular shaped tract of approximately 1016 acres of Savage River State Forest. This area is bisected by Fairview Road and reaches from the Poplar Lick drainage in the North to the powerline right of way in the Bear Pen Wildlands in the South. The area is a mosaic of conifer plantations, hardwood stands in various stages of succession, as well as fields and power line rights of way. There are numerous stands that have been managed for timber production by thinning, salvage harvest and regeneration harvest, as well as a portion of unmanaged Wildland in the South. The area includes one of the largest areas of open field habitat found on Savage River State Forest. This coupled with the extensive timber management and good public access, makes this a desirable location to focus on providing early succession habitat. This plan will provide an outline for maintaining the early succession habitat for the future.

Bear Pen Wildland

The northern portion of the Bear Pen Wildland is within this unit. This area, by legislation, is unavailable for active management. Therefore, this area will be allowed to mature and provide an un-manipulated habitat. We would expect the stand to mature and become an older growth forest habitat with mature trees and small light gaps where larger trees die or fall. This area was impacted by gypsy moth in the 2007-2009 years and has

some extensive mortality which will encourage early succession habitat in part of the area. The only habitat manipulation in this area is to potentially attempt exotic species control. There is extensive Japanese spirea throughout the drainage. Further study and consultation needs to be completed to decide if control is possible and warranted.

Field Habitat

A recent acquisition provided an area of open field habitat. This area was previously farmed and in agricultural hay production for decades. This area is comprised of approximately 25 acres of early succession habitat that is primarily in herbaceous cover. There is an additional 10 acres that are permanent herbaceous openings within the powerline rights of way in the unit. Portions of the fields are beginning to show succession changes with black locust and shrubs beginning to pioneer. There are also several areas that are abundant with black berry and other briars. These areas will be maintained for cover and to provide corridors and hedge rows within the fields. There are some honeysuckle and autumn olive bushes present which may be removed and controlled as possible.

The primary goal for this area is to maintain the open field habitat with lots of briar patches for cover for small mammals and birds. The area will be maintained in this mosaic of cover by varied mowing schedules, with portions of the fields being mowed more often and others only sporadically every few years as needed to prevent woody encroachment.

Orchard Habitat

Two areas within the unit totaling approximately 5.5 acres are old orchards that were perhaps maintained around old home sites. These areas still have numerous producing fruit trees and will be maintained as orchards and managed to provide continued fruit production for wildlife food. Apple and other fruit trees will be maintained by annual monitoring and release and pruning on a regular basis. Additional trees may be planted in these areas as necessary to maintain the fruit production and orchard conditions.

Red Spruce Sites

There are 3-4 locations with more steeply sloping terrain at the edges of the open field area that are planned to be planted with red spruce. The sites total approximately 4 acres. These sites are currently in primarily herbaceous cover with a few pioneer hardwoods encroaching. It is proposed to reforest these sites with red spruce to provide good cover and edge habitat that will be beneficial for various birds and small mammals. This will be a good compliment to the overall early succession habitat to be maintained throughout the management unit.

Aspen Management

There are three stands comprising approximately 6.6 acres that currently have been identified as predominantly aspen. Given that aspen is a species that can be regenerated easily to provide optimal breeding and diurnal feeding cover for species such as ruffed grouse and woodcock, these stands will be regenerated to encourage expansion of the aspen habitat and provide optimum cover for these species and others that would benefit from the younger thicker forest cover. Aspen tends to sprout from the roots and provides a dense stand of very vertical stems that are preferred by grouse and woodcock. This will in turn provide a more abundant food source for predatory birds and mammals.

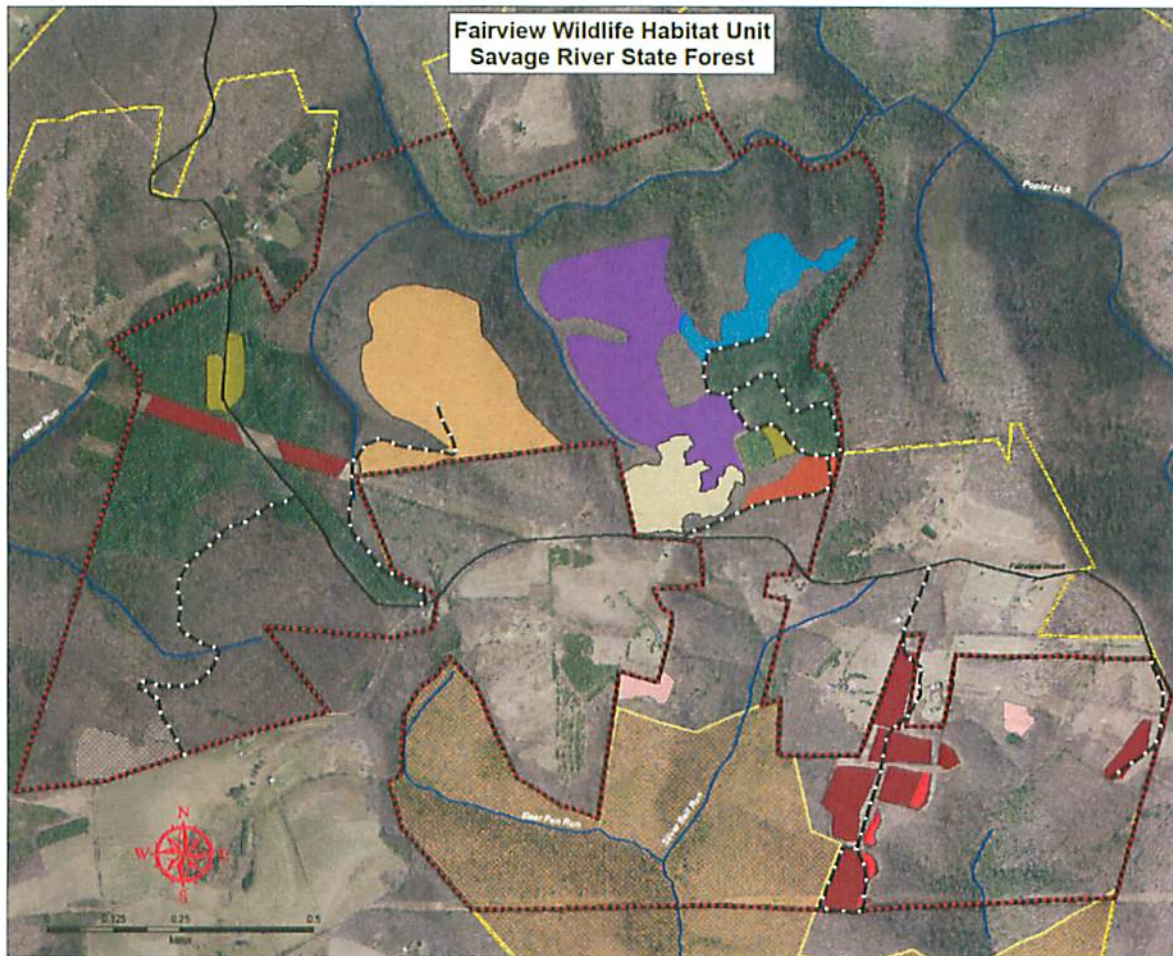
Conifer Plantations

There are approximately 90 acres of conifer plantations that occur within the unit. These plantations occur in two separate areas on either side of the management unit, and are primarily comprised of red pine with some white pine interspersed. One plantation on the east side of the unit is a mosaic that includes red pine, white pine, pitch pine, short-leaf pine and white spruce.

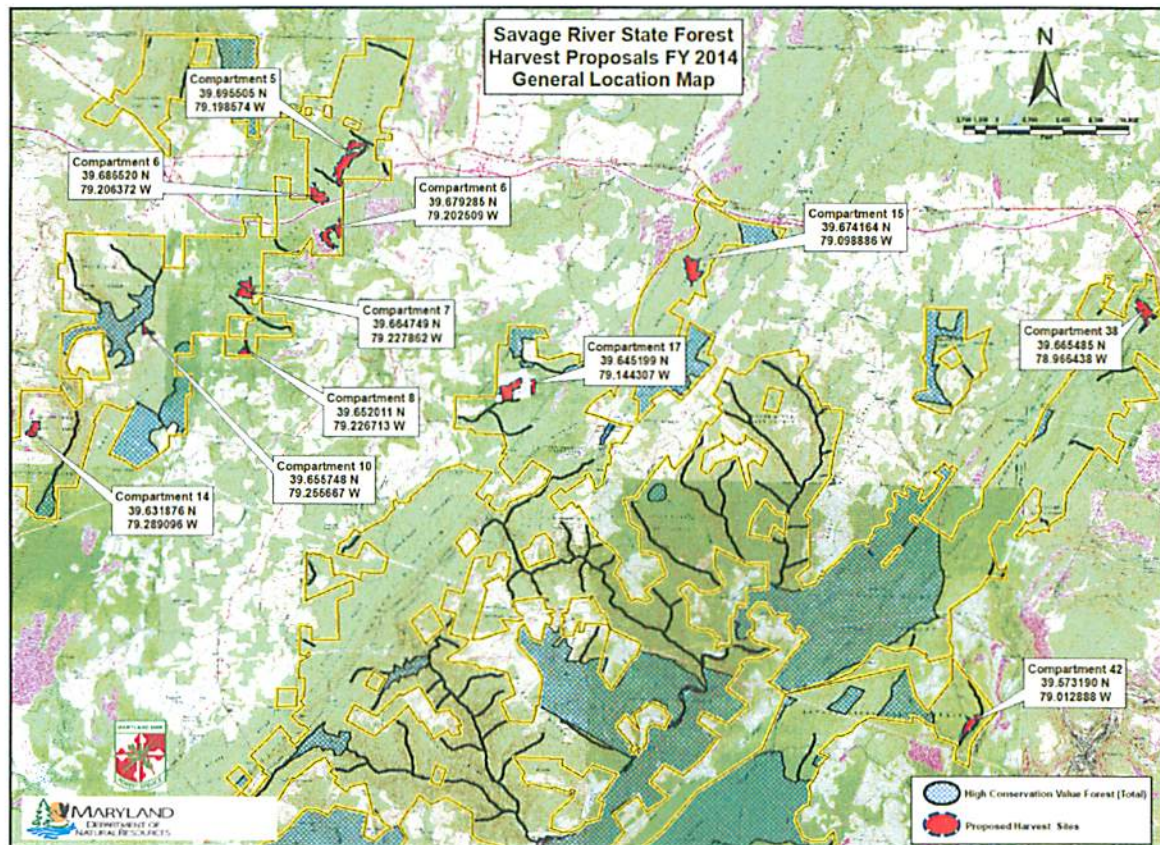
These conifer stands are valuable as habitat for a number of species. These stands are currently in need of thinning for encouraging their growth and habitat values. As these conifers mature and begin to regenerate, it is important to provide for continued conifer cover in this area. The native hemlocks have an uncertain future and though they currently occur throughout the drainages of the management unit, it is important to plan to keep conifers within the unit into the future. It is a concern that hardwood regeneration tends to occur and replace conifer stands. It is recommended that silvicultural methods and planting be used to continue to provide conifer cover with this unit.

Hardwood Stands

The majority of the management unit is comprised of various age classes of mixed oak hardwoods. Extensive silvicultural work has occurred in the unit over the last 20 years, and includes regeneration harvest and salvage harvests. These harvests occurred in 1991, 2003, 2009 (three as a result of gypsy moth mortality) and 2012. These harvests ranged in size from about 10 acres to over 50 acres. These harvests have provided a good mix of age classes and early succession forest structure that are the target of this management unit. It will be necessary to continue to look for opportunities to conduct silviculture and provide young forest habitats in this unit. There may be opportunities to do a few small regeneration harvests in the next 5-10 years. It may also be warranted to try to regenerate non-commercial stands in order to maintain the young forest habitat structure. It is advisable to complete smaller 5 – 10 acre regeneration harvests in a more patchy mosaic rather than larger harvests, unless salvage operations are necessary due to gypsy moth or other mortality.



F. Silvicultural Projects



General Location Map